



New Albany Police Department officer, Horseshoe praised at S. Ellen Jones assembly

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— Two years ago, when New Albany Police Department Officer Chad Armenta walked into S. Ellen Jones Elementary School, some students “crawled away from him,” according to Principal Susie Reis. Today, those same students are giving him hugs.

“It’s amazing what he has done for this school and this community,” Reis said. “He has really bonded well with the kids and he is such a positive influence.”

For the past two years, Armenta has worked from 9 to 11 a.m. at the school. A Title I grant paid for his services the first year, and a \$9,700 grant to S. Ellen from the Horseshoe Foundation of Floyd County paid for Armenta this year. Reis said the school will apply again for a Horseshoe grant to keep Armenta at the school next year.

On Friday afternoon, the school held a reception to thank the Horseshoe Foundation and Armenta. Reis said the school and its students have benefited from Armenta’s services in many ways. She said this is the best-performing quarter the school has had in the last five years in terms of attendance. And she credits much of that to Armenta.

When funding ran out for school resource officers, Reis said attendance at S. Ellen began falling. But once Armenta came on board, attendance quickly rebounded.

“People come in and out of this neighborhood all the time,” Reis said. “It’s very difficult to keep in touch with families.”

If a student is late or absent without excuse, Armenta will go to the home and make sure everything is OK. He will bring them to school if necessary. He also meets with parents and has gotten crime tips and has gained the trust from residents in the S. Ellen community, he said.

“I didn’t realize how big a difference it made until right before Christmas break and I walked into a classroom, and a little girl said, ‘There is the police,’” Armenta said. “She was new to the school. The other kids all know me as Officer Armenta.”

Not only has Armenta been credited with helping boost attendance, but for also serving as a role model to the youth in the school.

“He has really bonded well with the kids,” said Ted Fulmore, president of the S. Ellen Jones Neighborhood Association. “He has been a positive influence. So many of these kids need a stabilizing influence.”

New Albany Police Chief Greg Crabtree said he knew Armenta was liked, but he didn’t realize how popular until he walked into the school.

“You would have thought I brought Elvis back,” Crabtree said. “It’s just an excellent PR tool.”

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